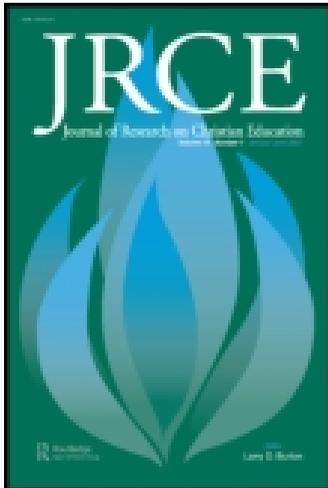


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The Postcolonial Reality of Using the Term “Liturgical” to Describe Hindu Dance

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Homi Bhabha, a postcolonial scholar influenced by the work of Franz Fanon and Edward Said, indicates that identities stimulate a need to negotiate in spaces that result in the remaking of boundaries. There is a call to expose the limitations of the East and the West in an effort to acknowledge the space in-between that interconnects the past traditions and history, with the present and the future. This study applies Homi Bhabha’s theory of hybridity to determine whether the term liturgical is appropriate to describe Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance. Presented are the elements of Kuchipudi dance and liturgical dance, and then contemplative dance is discussed as an appropriate medium in the space of hybridity between Kuchipudi dance and liturgical dance.

INTRODUCTION

Even though I am a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer, many of my Western colleagues use the term *liturgical dancer* to describe me. In one particular instance at the 2012 Mid-Atlantic Region of the American Academy of Religion annual conference in New Brunswick, NJ, a Catholic theologian colleague referred to me as a “Hindu liturgical dancer”, and then asked if this description would be an accurate way to describe who I am. With sincere sensitivity, my colleague caused me to pay close attention to my phenomenology. I experienced some discomfort when my colleague referred to me as a “liturgical Hindu dancer”, and I replied that I was not sure if I am a Hindu liturgical dancer because I was unfamiliar with the term *liturgical* in the sense of *liturgical dance*; therefore, I did not know if I was a liturgical Hindu dancer.

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Throughout my graduate experience, several colleagues, unlike my colleague at the conference, have insensitively referred to me as a *Hindu liturgical dancer* without asking if this phrase is an accurate way to describe who I am. I have also been called a “belly dancer”, “Middle Eastern dancer”, and a “Pan-Asian dancer” which are also inaccurate, insensitive descriptions of me as a dancer. While these descriptions are important to address for other purposes, I will specifically focus on why I am not a *liturgical dancer*. I chose to deal with this issue because in academia, this description is primarily used to refer to me as a dancer. Thus, there is a personal need for me to unpack the term *liturgical* since many individuals have this interpretation of me as a Hindu dancer before I even enter a pedagogical space. This issue is essential for me to address because I hope my colleagues will use an appropriate pedagogy to build the prior knowledge of viewers of my lectures and dance presentations before I enter a pedagogical space to teach. This focus is especially applicable to pedagogical settings because it reminds educators of the need to challenge assumptions that may misrepresent religion and culture.

While there are similarities between the genres of Christian liturgical dance and Hindu dance, there are also very distinct differences. For example, there is a difference in how each respective dance genre developed. The religious support for the development of Christian liturgical dance traditionally differs from the religious support for the development of Hindu dance. In turn, the pedagogy used to teach a Christian liturgical dance curriculum differs from the pedagogy used to teach a Hindu dance curriculum. I do not wish to create a false dichotomy between Christian liturgical dance and Hindu dance. What I am saying is that it is imperative to acknowledge the similarities and the distinct differences between both genres of dance. Once there is a sensitivity for Christian liturgical dance and Hindu dance, then I propose contemplative spiritual dance as a viable dance genre that sensitively entangles Christian liturgical dancers and Hindu dancers. In this pedagogical space, there is an opportunity for a new dance genre to develop with sensitivity for each respective dance genre.

EDWARD SAID: ORIENTALISM

It is crucial to move beyond the limited definitions of the term *liturgical* that arise because of clichéd understandings of the East and the West. There is a need for a philosophical, educational theory that acknowledges Orientalism as defined by Edward Said (1935–2003), essentially the founding father of postcolonial studies. In his seminal text *Orientalism* (1978), Said indicates that Orientalism occurs when a misrepresentation of religions and cultures creates false knowledge. Said starts to unpack the term *Orientalism* as he states is “a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the

Orient's special place in European Western experience" (Said, 1978, p. 1). Said's seminal text *Orientalism* shares how the Orient becomes what Europeans would like the Orient to be based on Western experience. When this shift occurs, the Orient becomes Orientalized in Said's sense of the term. He does not use the term to necessarily refer to specialized areas of study about the Orient, which he acknowledges, but rather uses the term to refer to a misrepresentation of the Orient based on what the West wants the Orient to be. Said (1978) writes,

Orientalism stands forth and away from the Orient: that Orientalism makes sense at all depends more on the West than on the Orient, and this sense is directly indebted to various Western techniques of representation that make the Orient visible, clear, 'there' in discourse about it. And these representations rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for their effects, not upon a distant and amorphous Orient. (p. 22)

Orientalism does not represent the Orient based on what the Orient is but rather Orientalism represents the Orient based on what the West wants the Orient to be. Orientalism is representative of a Western ideal of the Orient, which creates a fictionalized version of the Orient based on the West.

According to Said (1978), philosophical researchers should look at how other authors define the terms that they use in order to unpack Orientalist stereotypes, biases, and oversights that marginalize and/or distort Eastern religious and cultural practices. Then, philosophical researchers can move towards a more pragmatic, humanistic approach to the relationship between the East and the West.

Said shows, throughout his work, how the terms used are vulnerable to the possibility of power manipulations that serve to conceal the complex nature of social realities and hide unequal power relationships. Unpacking these terms helps Said move from an Orientalist to a De-Orientalized theory of religious cultural interaction. With Said's need to De-Orientalize oversights that distort the East in mind, I will focus on unpacking the term *liturgical* and whether this term is appropriate to define the embodied spirituality and dance form of Hindu dance. To accomplish this task, I will apply Said's postcolonial theoretical framework to show why the term *liturgical* is problematic when describing Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dance.

I will challenge the assumption of Westerners who describe me as a "Hindu liturgical dancer", beginning with an analysis of Said's postcolonial theoretical perspective that deals with the urgency to unpack terms to reject Orientalization. Here, I engage in a De-Orientalized pedagogy through the written text as I present accurate facts of Hindu dance and liturgical dance in a pedagogical space. Once this presentation occurs, then I address another urgent postcolonial issue, which deals with the misuses of Hindu dance.

It is crucial for me to point out that both Westerners and Easterners, who had an Orientalist interpretation of Hinduism as a part of liturgical dance, caused Orientalism to thrive. To prevent further misuse of Hindu dance, I propose contemplative spiritual dance in the space of hybridity as a medium where liturgical dancers and Hindu dancers can dance together without Orientalizing each respective dance tradition.

LITURGICAL DANCE

After familiarizing myself with the liturgical dance literature, I do understand why my colleagues refer to me as a “liturgical dancer”. Carla DeSola, a liturgical dance pioneer, helps me to understand this reference as she writes,

Practiced by liturgical artists, dance serves and functions as a conduit from the inner workings of the spirit to the outer expression of today’s worship. As an art form that is fleeting, evanescent, and transient, dance makes an indelible impression upon the viewer. (DeSola, 1990, pp. 153–154)

Evidently both liturgical dance and Kuchipudi dance provide the dancer with a phenomenological experience as the dancer uses the body to channel a divine energy. DeSola claims that while the dance lasts a seemingly short time, the dance still leaves a permanent impression on the viewers. Based on my own phenomenological experience, I sense that the dance does leave an indelible mark on the dancer. It seems that there is some indelibility caused by liturgical and Kuchipudi dance.

DeSola (1990) continues,

Communication is body-to-body with the distance between sanctuary to pew being traversed kinesthetically. The viewer is in living communication with the dancer, sharing the configurations of space, form, movement qualities, musical, and visual elements. (pp. 153–154).

This quote assumes that the audience has a phenomenological experience through the dance. It seems to me that those who identify me as a “liturgical dancer” probably feel a religious presence and religious connection with me as a dancer, which causes them to use the word *liturgical* to describe me. Nevertheless, it is crucial for me to reveal the complex nature of the term *liturgical* since my colleagues often use this term to describe me as a dancer.

SAID’S POSTCOLONIAL THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON TERMS

Regarding postcolonial theoretical perspective on terms, Said (1978) states,

We need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate but because it is not even trying to be accurate. (p. 71)

Sometimes, the Orientalist does not even attempt to understand the true nature of the East. Unlike Said, I do not believe that this is always the case. For example, I do feel that most of my colleagues try to accurately portray the type of dancer I am in the best way possible based on their knowledge of words. I, as the dancer, appreciate that they equate me with liturgical dance, albeit I do not claim to be a liturgical dancer. I appreciate this attempt because it shows that my colleagues accept me as a religious dancer as opposed to a mere dancer. However, now, it behooves me to help my colleagues understand the postcolonial reality of using the term *liturgical* to describe me. Here, there is a gap between how viewers of the dance view me and how I view myself as a dancer. It is necessary for me to help my colleagues gain an accurate understanding of who I am as a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer.

I aim to De-Orientalize Orientalist interpretations of me as a dancer and prevent Orientalist agendas from thriving through the misrepresentation of the East that occurs when certain terminology is employed. This is important because of the colonial processes that influenced the development of language. Said (1993) states, “No emphasis was placed on the relationship between English and the colonial processes that brought the language and its literature to the Arab world” (p. 305). In this quote, Said points out that the English language is a language that Easterners learned because of colonial processes. Said (1999) writes about his complex struggles with language in his memoir:

The three languages became a pointedly sensitive issue for me at the age of fourteen. Arabic was forbidden and ‘wog’; French was always ‘theirs,’ not mine; English was authorized, but unacceptable as the language of the hated British. (p. 198)

Said indicates that language served to colonize the East. The terminological choices of words are not neutral but rather a powerful dynamic between the colonizer and the colonized. Said’s native Arabic language was not accepted in the West. Furthermore, Said indicates that the French language did not feel like it belonged to the East. Said relates that he spoke English because it was authorized, yet Easterners seemed to hate the English language because they were forced to speak it. Evidently, there is a strong power dynamic present as Easterners were forced to learn the English language.

My personal history is similar to Said’s in this sense. My ancestors, originally from India, were forced to learn English once they became indentured servants who worked on the plantations in Guyana located in South America. Thus, I share Said’s concerns about language, which has retained a power dynamic between the colonizer and the colonized. Nevertheless, as English speaking individuals, we understand that certain words in the English language have particular connotations. While I acknowledge that I reap great

benefits from speaking English, I am also aware that there are certain parts of Eastern religion and culture that the English language cannot accurately portray. For this reason, I propose that Westerners use some Eastern words when portraying the East. Westerners should use the words in a manner that allows the Eastern words to retain their history and meaning. The Eastern words, in a De-Orientalized sense, will then become part of a Western language that aims to accurately portray the East. Keep in mind that it is crucial to use the words in a De-Orientalized sense to prevent the terms from being co-opted for colonial purposes. In this case, it is my hope that people will refer to me as a “Kuchipudi Hindu dancer” rather than a “liturgical dancer”.

Said (1978) continues to discuss the particularity of words as he writes,

The Orient was a word which later accrued to it a wide field of meanings, associations, and connotations, and that these did not necessarily refer to the real Orient but to the field of the surrounding word. (p. 203)

I would like to draw a parallel between the way Said uses the word *Orient* in this quote and the word *liturgical*. From a postcolonial perspective, in one regard, those who use the word *liturgical* to describe Kuchipudi dance gives Kuchipudi dance a new representation. This representation does not depend on an accurate representation of the East, but rather relies on the West's inaccurate understanding of the East. The word *liturgical* has certain meanings, associations, and connotations that do not accurately reflect the true nature of Kuchipudi Hindu dance. By using the word *liturgical* to describe Kuchipudi Hindu dance, a new Orientalized history based on the meanings, associations, and connotations of liturgical dance is *given* to Kuchipudi dance. The term *liturgical* is an inaccurate portrayal of Kuchipudi dance because this term displaces the actuality of Kuchipudi dance and causes the West to reflect itself. Essentially, this inaccurate portrayal causes the cultural other of the Kuchipudi dancer to disappear as the West attempts to reach out to understand the East. Perhaps, it is safe to say that Kuchipudi dance is *like* liturgical dance but it is *not* liturgical dance because Kuchipudi dance has its own meanings, associations, and connotations based on its own history. From another perspective, it seems that the term *liturgical dance* is a term that serves as an umbrella for all forms of religious dance simply because the word *liturgical* implies *religious*.

At this point, I turn to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* for a working definition of the term *liturgical*, which defines it as “of or having the characteristics of liturgy.” Near the entry for the term *liturgical*, the dictionary lists “Other Christian Religious Terms” which include “Pentateuch, blasphemy, curate, doxology, eremite, iconoclasm, liturgy, orison, pneuma, reliquary.” Even if the word *liturgy* is used to describe other religions, the dictionary implies that Christianity primarily dominates the word. This implication in itself makes me uncomfortable to use the word *liturgical* to describe me

because I feel as if I am condoning further colonization. Now, I turn to relate the dictionary's definition of the word *liturgy*, described as meaning "a Eucharistic rite". This description clearly refers to the Eucharist, which is a part of Christianity. The dictionary then goes on to say, "a customary repertoire of ideas, phrases, or observances" and then gives the example of "studying the *liturgies* of different religions". There is a hidden power dynamic here in both the terms *liturgical* and *liturgy*. The dictionary primarily uses the terms *liturgical* and *liturgy* to first refer to Christianity. Then, it seems to indicate the willingness to share the terms with other religions that have a "customary repertoire of ideas, phrases, or observances." This implies that the terms *liturgy* and *liturgical* are primarily used as Christian terms. It seems that when individuals refer to *liturgical dance*, they mean *Christian liturgical dance*, which begins as a genre of dance around the 1930s (LaRue, 1994).

For the purpose of defining "liturgical dance", I turn to the *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* where Johnson (2011) states,

Liturgical dance, or dance specifically for worship, is a form of prayer in which the body is used as a vehicle for expression and communication. Sometimes dance can be done by one or a few dancers for the larger gathering. Other times, all people who are able to move are invited—and expected—to participate. Some dances are simple, such as procession dances that involve many people, often in a gathering or entrance rite. Other dances, which proclaim or celebrate the gospel or take the form of an embodied prayer within a worship service, may include a select group of people dancing for the entire group. Meditation dances are often performed by one dancer or a few dancers for the rest of the congregation, who prayerfully reflect on the dance. (p. 387)

Johnson provides several components for liturgical dance. According to his definition, *liturgical dance* is "specifically for worship" (p. 387), which does not just mean worship on the part of the dancer—Johnson also says that the viewers "prayerfully reflect on the dance" (p. 387). This definition means that the viewers also engage in worship with the dancer. Also, Johnson states, "all people who are able to move are invited—and expected—to participate" (p. 387), which further shows that all members of the congregation have the potential to use dance as a form of worship. To this extent, a liturgical dance education is not essential for the members. What is important is that these members move prayerfully as they use the body to worship. Evidently, the *liturgical dance tradition* of Christianity has a specific history, albeit very recent, that Hinduism and other religions do not completely share. This is one reason why I as a Hindu dancer prefer that my colleagues use the term *Hindu dancer* to describe me because it specifies who I am as a dancer. If they equate me as similar to a *Christian liturgical dancer*, then they assume that Hindu dance and Christian dance share a similar history.

For the purposes of this analysis of liturgical dance, I will develop a working definition for the term *liturgical dance* based on my readings of the literature— *liturgical dance* is dance that pertains to worship that involves both the dancer and the viewers of the dance as religious participants. Furthermore, *liturgical dance* primarily is a Christian genre of dance that developed based on the Christian liturgy. While there are many unique differences between Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance, I will explore the main distinctions that arise in the development of each respective dance genre. Keep in mind that Hindu dance starts from a monist perspective that unites the mind and body, whereas liturgical dance starts with the acknowledgment of a dualistic view of the mind and body. Liturgical dance essentially aims to overcome the dualistic views of the body. With these starting points in mind, first I relate the way dance developed in Hinduism and Christianity. Afterwards, I explore the colonial influences that Orientalize Hindu dance. Following this purpose, I discuss the nature of religious support for each respective dance form. For the purposes of providing an accurate description of the education process of each dance form, I look at the pedagogy and curriculum of religious dance educators. To begin, I will now relate the differences in the development of dance. This focus is crucial because a De-Orientalized comprehension of how each respective dance style developed will provide an accurate historical understanding of each dance tradition. This understanding will prevent any Orientalized knowledge of artificial similarities and differences from further development.

DIFFERENCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DANCE

Here, I will briefly introduce the differences in the development of Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance. Keep in mind that some aspects of Hindu dance and Christian dance overlap. Therefore, there are some similarities between Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance. However, the differences outweigh the similarities. My goal is to show how Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance have very distinct histories. Each respective dance form developed based on certain circumstances. For this reason, the two terms, albeit similar, have distinct connotations because of the dance tradition's development. Therefore, to say Kuchipudi Hindu dance is liturgical dance or Christian liturgical dance is Hindu dance is inaccurate because the terms have distinct histories wrapped into the terminology.

I will discuss the development of Hindu dance. The *Natya Shastra of Bharata Muni* (Bharatamuni, 2000, pp. 1–12), the ancient Hindu text about the ethic of Hindu dance, which has been translated by the Board of Scholars, relates the creation of Indian classical Hindu dance. To begin with, according to Hinduism (Yogananda, 1995, p. 735), there are four ages of this world. The first age is *Satya yug* (the age of truth and nobility); the second age is

Treta yug (the silver age); the third age is *Dwapara yug* (the age of Krishna); and the fourth age is *Kali yug* (the dark age). During the age of *Treta yug*, humankind started to enjoy the material aspects of this world more than the divine aspects. Consequently, the *devas* (demi gods) approached Bramhaji (the creator according to Hinduism) with a request to create something to help humankind maintain the traditional aspects of Hinduism while also enjoying their time within the world.

In other words, there was a need to maintain morality while also taming the senses. The senses have the potential to influence a sense of divinity or indulgences that decrease spiritual well-being. For example, while the dancers are dressed like queens, princesses, and divine servants, they are not to be looked upon with a lustful eye. The dancer is a *devadasi* (servant of God) who seeks to relate the epics of Hinduism through dance. Even during the bodily movement of the dance, the dancer seeks to engage in a divine experience where a heavenly aura surrounds the performance as the performer and the viewers engage in a divine connection because of the tamed senses.

To continue with the creation of Hindu dance, the *devas* wanted morality but with divinity present among the five senses. With this request in mind, Bramhaji decided to create the art of dance for humankind, Gods, and demons to enjoy.

The ancient text of Nandikeshwara (1997) states,

Brahma extracted Pathyam from Rgveda, Abhinayas from Yajurveda, Ganam from Samaveda and Rasas from Atharwanaveda and composed this sastra, i.e., N.S. which bestows Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, the four principal objects of human existence. (p. 15)

In Hinduism, a monist religion, the many emerge from a Supreme Being. Bramhaji, Vishnuji, and Shivaji are known as the *Trinity* in Hinduism. Bramha creates while Vishnu sustains and Shiva destroys. The previous quote indicates that Bramha took specific parts from the four main Vedas (religious authoritative texts) in Hinduism as Bramha created the *Natya Shastra*, which is known as the *Hindu Veda* of dance. Bramha took Pathyam, which is the element of drama from the Rgveda. The component of Abhinayas, or gestural and facial expressions, came from the Yajurveda. *Gitam* or *Ganam*, as Nandikeshwara (1997) states, is singing that comes from the Samaveda. *Rasas*, the sentiments of dance, is from the Atharava Veda. Bramha, the great creator of Hinduism, created the *Natya Shastra* as an authoritative text of dance. Bramha then instructed the intelligent Sage Bharata to complete the *Natya Shastra*. Sage Bharatamuni is the credited author of the *Natya Shastra*. Bramha instructed Sage Bharata to teach the form of Indian classical Hindu dance to worthy disciples. Through dance, individuals attain Dharma (morality), Artha (wealth), Kama (worldly pleasures) and Moksha

(liberation). Thus, the human existence attains fulfillment in this world and also on a spiritual level.

The *Natya Shastra* discusses the religious ethics of dance and the dancer as a part of Hinduism. In fact, in ancient times, dancers were called Devadasis, which means servants of the lord. Specifically, for instance, the *Natya Shastra* (2000, pp. 7–10) discusses *puja* (religious worship) of the stage before the dance performance begins. This occurs because the dancer invites One God to manifest in different forms to protect the stage and guard the dancer. It is important to note that while Hinduism is a monist religion, many sects of Hinduism believe in various forms of a divine being (Vidyarthi, 1988, p. 18). In other words, from One Supreme Being, many demi-gods emerge. To continue, *puja* is a ritual that involves the self-purification of the mind through a focus on a Supreme Being. Those who perform puja should prepare to perform the ritual by maintaining a distance from unholy aspects of the world.

Vidyarthi (1988, p. 105), a contemporary Eastern scholar of Hinduism, states that those who perform puja should *fast* (meaning eat no meat or seafood) and also should free oneself of evil intentions. Those who perform puja with evil intentions to cause harm to others perform a tainted puja that is not considered holy. Vidyarthi (1988, p. 107) continues to state that puja is a ritual performed by a Brahman *pandit* (priest of nobility). The *pandit* first asks the devotees (performers of puja) to purify the body internally through sipping water and touching the various parts of the body with holy water. After, the *pandit* invokes the various forms of the Gods and Goddesses (essentially One Supreme Being though) into the *murtis* (holy brass images in many cases). Then, the *pandit* guides the devotees to focus on a particular form of the Supreme Being. The devotees bathe the image, decorate the image with scents and clothing, as well as offer flowers and fruit. After dancers perform puja with whole-hearted intentions, the dancers are ready to relate the discourses of Hinduism through the art of dance.

This approach is the reason why traditional Hindu dance recitals begin with the dance known as *Pushpanjali*. In *Pushpanjali*, the dancer offers flowers on stage to Lord Ganesha as the dancer prays for the Supreme Being to bless all aspects of the performance (Bharatamuni, 2000, p. 22). *Ganesha* is the son of Lord Shiva and Mother Parvati (Vidyarthi, 1988, p. 58). Ganesha metaphorically has an elephant trunk and elephant ears. His elephant head represents knowledge, whereas his elephant trunk represents the manner in which he destroys obstacles. Ganesha sweeps away negativity with his long elephant trunk as he uses his intellect. Similarly, Hindu dancers pray to Ganesha to bless them with knowledge and the ability to humbly destroy obstacles in the way of the performance or that are a part of the performance.

While the religious tradition of Indian classical Hindu dance developed in the ancient times of Hinduism with a particular set of religious ethics and as a method to tame the senses of the human body, the liturgical dance tradition of Christianity developed in the modern era. Although Ruth St. Denis

(1879–1968), an American dance pioneer, was not considered a “liturgical dancer” by many but rather remembered as a dancer who focused on Oriental themes, St. Denis influenced the theoretical framework of liturgical dance. DeSola (1990) emphasizes this point:

Ruth St. Denis reflected that a sacred dancer’s training was twofold; the dancer must train not only the body, but also be concerned with the development of the spirit. St. Denis can be considered a ‘foremother’ of liturgical dance, having performed as early as 1910 at the Riverside Church, New York City. (p. 155)

While DeSola does not seem to claim that the form of liturgical dance starts with St. Denis, De Sola evidently claims that St. Denis is a “foremother” (p. 155) of liturgical dance. St. Denis lived during 1879-1968, which is during today’s modern era. St Denis used sacred dance to unite the mind and spirit as a component of what is now known as liturgical dance, which started to create a framework for liturgical dance. This fairly recent framework develops based on the sacred dances from India that St. Denis encountered when visiting the East. Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona (1990) write,

Modern dance pioneers Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn made overt religious subject matter a focus for their dances in the early twentieth century when that period’s ballet had given such themes scant attention. Shawn’s ministry was already moving from the church to the stage by 1911 when he saw St. Denis dance in Denver. Her performance convinced him that religion, dance, and drama could be combined. While she stressed sacred dances from India, albeit in a loose manner, he introduced numerous dances with Hebrew and Christian scriptural themes. (pp. 3–4)

The creation of liturgical dance starts to emerge with a form based on Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn who were inspired by the sacred dances of India. Here, it is evident that the sacred dances from India influenced St. Denis’s development of “sacred dance” (1990, pp. 3–4). Ted Shawn, a famous American dance pioneer influenced by St. Denis, introduced Hebrew and scriptural themes to liturgical dance. I chose to briefly discuss Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn since they were known as the first pioneers of American dance.

My point here is to show the distinction between the creation of dance in Hinduism versus the development of dance in Christianity. To summarize, the form of Indian classical Hindu dance is rooted in the ancient times and ancient texts of Hinduism. There is a specific ethic for dance in Hinduism. On the contrary, liturgical dance, albeit found in Biblical references (Taylor, 1990), took form as a recognized dance tradition in modern day. Unlike Hindu dance, there are no particular ancient religious texts for liturgical dance. While Hindu dancers adhere to a Hindu dance ethic as stated in the ancient Hindu texts, liturgical dancers develop their own code of ethics

since it does not come explicitly from a religious text. I do not claim that the dance ethics of liturgical dancers are not inspired by religious texts. Rather, I claim that Christianity does not have a religiously accepted scriptural text across Christendom that relates liturgical dance ethics.

My interest here was to provide an accurate description of the development of Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance. It is my hope that this description helps to build a De-Orientalized knowledge base of Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance. I now move onto relate how Hindu dance became Orientalized when the public used Orientalized knowledge with an artificial knowledge of Hindu dance to cause Orientalism to thrive.

ORIENTALIZATION OF HINDU DANCE

Evidently, Hindu dance and liturgical dance developed in distinct ways based on their own unique histories. Because dance developed differently within the sphere of Hindu dance and the sphere of liturgical dance, the West and the East each have a different perspective about what dance is. The West imposed its own view of dance onto the East during colonization. This is crucial to mention because it shows how the West dominated the East by forcing the East to develop certain frameworks for dance. Even though we live in a postcolonial era today, the residual effects of colonization are evident in the East's development of dance in Bollywood, which is an Eastern form of Hollywood. The West Orientalized the East, which in turn, caused the East to Orientalize itself. I aim to show how Hindu dance differs from Western views of dance and aim to return Hindu dance back to a divine form of dance. To accomplish this task, I will now briefly discuss the history of the Hindu dance tradition known as *Kathak*. My unnerving goal here is to show how the West Orientalized the Kathak dance tradition of Hinduism.

Kathak is a dance form in the North Indian classical Hindu dance tradition that the West Orientalizes. The history of the Kathak dance tradition has roots in Hinduism. The Bhakti Movement of the medieval time period incorporated Kathak as a means to demonstrate the movement's interests in moving away from a caste-based, ritualistic practice of Hinduism. Kathak dances were performed to the songs of great saint poets of the Bhakti Movement such as Mirabai and Surdas (Chakravorty, 2008, p. 36). However, there was once again a change as the Kathak dance tradition went from sacred to profane because of Orientalization.

The suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny by the British in 1857 accelerated the decline of the kingdom in North India. The demise of the princely states also obliterated the wealthy, art-loving gentry. The Cantonment Act of 1864 arbitrarily relocated the dancers to bazaars outside the cities for entertainment of soldiers. This resulted in musicians and dancers being uprooted from North Indian cities and migrating to Calcutta, the

new capital of the British Raj, in search of patrons. The city thus became the prime destination for dancers and musicians from the North, who found new sources of patronage among the Bengali elite. (Chakravorty, 2008, pp. 28–29)

Here is the beginning of the Orientalization of Indian classical Hindu dance. The British did not know the literature of the dance tradition, history of the dance tradition, or the depth and meaning behind the dances. To them, the dance was foreign and exotic. Thus, they enjoyed entertainment by the dancers. The dancers no longer danced to unite with the divine, but rather dancers danced in servitude to the British. The dance became what the British wanted it to become. In other words, it was Orientalized based on the Western's view of what the dance should be. The British enforced the knowledge they constructed of the dance through education and laws in the political sphere. The people of India had no choice but to comply with the laws of the political sphere despite their religious beliefs.

For both the English missionaries and the Hindu reformist sect, Indian eroticism was the cause of immorality. All traditional cultural practices, therefore, needed to be revamped for purification and national regeneration. The banning of “indecent” literature, poetry and songs that began with Britain's Obscenity Act of 1857 culminated in the banning of other ‘sinful practices’ like devadasi and nautch. The banning of regimental bazaars where soldiers found pleasures from native women like the nautch girls was aided by Britain's Contagious Disease Act of 1864 made it usual for officials to randomly harass nautch girls for medical examinations as venereal diseases rose among British soldiers during this time. The popularity of the nautch girls among British soldiers made the former easy targets for such harassment. One must remember that it had been an official policy after the Mutiny of 1857 to select healthy and beautiful ‘specimens’ among the courtesans and relocate them arbitrarily for the entertainment of soldiers. (Chakravorty, 2008, p. 45)

As the British colonized and Orientalized India, the dance girls at bazaars who entertained soldiers transformed from healthy, beautiful girls, to unhealthy girls probably because of the stress of being objectified. There are implications that many females forcefully became prostitutes. Disease began to spread among the dancers. The British implemented another set of laws to ban dance and indecent literature. Sadly, the British misrepresented the dance and the literature, and thus did India a great disservice due to Orientalization. Here, the tradition of dance and literature becomes corrupted with worldly pleasures as opposed to representative of the traditions of Hinduism. Evidently, the West and the East have a different perspective on the purposes of dance. In turn, this influences the history of dance in the West and the East as well as impacts on the role of dance in religion.

While the British once forcefully Orientalized Hindu dance during the era of colonization, Orientalization still has the potential to occur. This will happen if Hindu dance does not maintain Hindu traditions, but rather imposes the form of liturgical dance or other non-Hindu theoretical dance frameworks onto Hindu dance. For example, contemporary Indian movies in Bollywood (the Indian version of Hollywood) Orientalizes Hindu dance in many cases. Hindu dance has a specific theoretical framework to operate within just as liturgical dance has a separate, distinct framework to work out of. Therefore, it is imperative to acknowledge the separate theoretical frameworks of each respective dance tradition and refrain from imposing one framework onto the other. With the different theoretical frameworks of dance in mind, I now discuss support for dance from religious authorities.

SUPPORT FROM RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES

While traditional religious leaders of Hinduism support Hindu dance, Christian liturgical dance does not receive the same traditional religious support. The lack of religious support for Christian liturgical dance may be due to the usage of dance in pagan theatres and also the style of dance (LaRue, 1994). Overall, early Christian thinkers such as St. Paul and St. Augustine viewed the body suspiciously as a potential locus of evil (LaRue, 1996). Adams (1990) writes,

Basil the Great (c. 329-379), Bishop of Caesarea . . . proceeded to attack individual dance performed by women as it distracted the attention of the men who sat and watched in church. John Chrysostom (345-407), Bishop of Constantinople, blessed the performance of the ring dances while he censored those who through excess engaged in the individual dance. (p. 38)

Adams refers to Basil the Great, one of the prominent defenders of the Church who battled against 4th century heresies. Basil the Great believed women who dance distract men probably because he thought that men do not have tamed senses. Similarly, the Bishop of Constantinople, another prominent figure of the Church, censored individual dance probably for similar reasons and allowed communal ring dances because they did not seem to provacatize the body as much. This point is a major distinction between Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance. Hindu dance was created to tame the five senses of the body. The body is not sinful but rather is a vehicle for human existence. In essence, Hinduism acknowledges that there are bodily pleasures that humans encounter by their very existence. Hindu dance was created as a way to tame the bodily pleasures in a divine way that allows the enjoyment of wealth and bodily desires/pleasures in a manner that adheres to morality and leads to liberation. On the contrary, Christianity seems to battle against the bodily pleasures that arise in individuals.

There is not a focus on taming the senses but rather a focus on censoring the pleasures that the senses have the ability to stimulate.

In fact, the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Christian churches did not permit liturgical dance as part of the liturgy. The disconnection between liturgical dancers and the liturgy caused liturgical dance to take on a life of its own in its own part of the religious sphere. Because of the lack of guidance from religious leaders, I feel liturgical dancers sometimes used their creative ability insensitively as they developed something *new* in the pedagogical space of hybridity. For example, Apostolos-Cappadona (1990) mentions the “liturgical dances” of the *Embattled Garden*, in which this liturgical dance performance deals with the classical interpretation of the virgin and the whore on stage (p. 126). Being the whore, accomplishes what the Catholic Church feared. It moves dance from sacred to profane. It becomes the profane *in* the sacred. The support or lack of support of religious authorities influences the pedagogy and curriculum of each respective dance tradition. Since Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance maintain different theoretical frameworks, I will now discuss pedagogy and curriculum within dance.

PEDAGOGY AND CURRICULUM

Hindu dance adheres to a specific curriculum that emerges based on the ancient Hindu texts of dance. Since I am a Kuchipudi Indian Classical Hindu dancer, I will specifically describe the pedagogy and curriculum within the Kuchipudi Hindu dance form. Devi (2004) focuses on Kuchipudi in the following quote.

Kuchipudi, is a dance style, which has all the salient features of Classical dance system. It strictly follows Bharata’s *Natyashastra* and Nandikeshwara’s *Abhinaya Darpanam*, the authorities and ancient treatise on dance, which are the main sources for all the Indian classical dance traditions. The Kuchipudi dance-drama tradition is strictly based on the principles of the *Natya Shastra* and has a great historical background and cultural heritage dating back to centuries. (p. 80)

There is a deep sense of religious history intertwined with Hindu dance. Bramha, the creator in Hinduism, creates dance with specific components that are meant to tame the human body to ensure a fruitful human existence. Thus, the tradition of Kuchipudi Hindu dance has a very specific curriculum that develops within traditional Hinduism as opposed to outside of Hinduism. The major Kuchipudi dance items in the curriculum include:

- *Pushpanjali*—an invocational dance to Shri Ganesha who is the remover of obstacles, in which dancer asks for blessings throughout life and asks Shri Ganesha to provide the dancer with knowledge;

- *Tarijem*—a beginner’s dance that teaches the dancer a sequence of dance steps;
- *Sabdam*—a type of dance that uses gestures and facial expressions to relate hero-heroine relationships in Hinduism. There is intricate footwork in this dance;
- *Shiva Kriti*—a dance in praise of Lord Shiva, the Hindu God of dance;
- *Bhama Kalapam*—a famous repertoire that relates the distress of Satyabhama, the wife of Shri Krishna, who yearns for the love of Shri Krishna, an incarnation of God in Hinduism;
- *Tarangam*—a dance that relates the meditative element of dance; after relating the narratives of Hinduism, the dancer engages in meditation as the dancer unites the mind and body; the dancer balances a pot of water on the head to signify the heavy responsibilities of life while dancing on the rims of a brass plate to signify the bond to the Earth;
- *Tillana*—a fast dance sequence of sculpturous poses; and
- *Mangalam*—dance that thanks the One Supreme Being of Hinduism, who emerges in many forms, to protect and bless the dancer and viewers of the performance.

Hindu dancers focus more on their phenomenological experience and spiritual self-development. While the audience plays an important role, the audience does not need to engage in communal worship with the dancer. Some viewers might have a religious experience whereas others might have an aesthetic experience, while some might have a different type of experience. As a Hindu dancer, I aim to engage in religious and cultural sharing, which does not require the audience to engage in communal worship with me as a dancer. This approach is quite different from Christian liturgical dance that seems to be more of a missionary dance genre compared to Hindu dance.

To continue, DeSola (1990) urges liturgical dancers to think of a liturgical pedagogy as well as a liturgical curriculum as she writes,

A theory of liturgical dance considers the role of the dancer in the liturgical community; the role of dance in the liturgical structure, including the varieties of religious themes which may be danced; and the communal nature or dimension of dance and worship. The practice of liturgical dance may be divided into the preparation of the dancer and community and the shared experience of the liturgical dancer and the community during the liturgy. In the context of dance as religious studies, special attention is given to two components of the preparation of the liturgical dancer: the practice of embodying and dancing prayers and the use of dance in the study of biblical passages. Both of these underline the presupposition that we learn by dancing. Further, both elements are ideally part of the preparation and training of a liturgical dancer and choreographer. Both of them in their own right, are valuable practices

for religious studies, and may be done independent of liturgical consideration. (p. 155)

DeSola distinguishes between the theory and practice of liturgical dance. In theory, liturgical dancers have a role to fulfill as a part of a liturgical community within a liturgical structure. Also, there is a communal nature that links dance to worship. In practice, the liturgical dancers need to learn to embody prayers and dance biblical passages while the liturgical community prepares to have a liturgical dance experience by studying Biblical passages. DeSola (1990) continues,

The dancer's essence is founded on a unity of body, mind, and spirit. The intuitive, nonverbal faculties receive the sources of inspiration that lead the dancer to express interpretations or restatements of ancient or modern concepts, freshened as they were by the spirit. The ministry of the sacred dancer is multifaceted. At times, the dancer serves as 'teacher,' 'prophet,' 'gatherer,' 'evangelist,' 'witness,' and 'priest.' These roles are part of the dancer's contribution to the liturgy and the community. (p. 155)

The liturgical dancer's body, mind, and spirit unite as the dancer expresses an interpretation or restatement of scriptures and/or concepts. In this sense, the liturgical dancer becomes a minister that serves as a "teacher, prophet, gatherer, evangelist, witness, and priest". DeSola (1990) emphasizes the communal nature of the Christian community with the emphasized focus on the congregation.

As a communal form of worship, liturgical dance offers a renewed awareness of who these people are as a community. When bodies sway in unison, and arms lift in prayer, the congregation can become conscious, in an experiential way through the workings of the spirit, that they are a living, breathing family of God. (p. 153)

In this quote, it seems that liturgical dancers are ministers who lead the congregation in a communal form of worship through dance. Bodies sway and arms lift in prayer as liturgical dancers and the congregation unites as a family of God. This emphasis on community is important to acknowledge in the tradition of Christian liturgical dance. DeSola (1990) relates the categories of liturgical dance in the following quote, "Liturgical dance can fall into five different categories: processional, prayer (including acclamation and invocation), proclamation, meditation, and celebration" (p. 159).

The mentioned categories pertain to the liturgy and the relationship between the liturgical dancer and the liturgical community. While there is not strict curriculum for liturgical dancers, there seems to be a structure to liturgical dance in the sense that there needs to be a relationship between the liturgical dancer and the liturgy. Even if the liturgical dancer performs

on stage and not in churches as part of the liturgy, it seems that the liturgical dancer's aim is to spread the word of Christianity for Christians or those who wish to convert to Christianity. This differs from my goal as a Kuchipudi Indian classical Hindu dancer. I do not wish to spread the word of Hinduism in a faith-based manner for Hindus or those who wish to convert to Hinduism. Rather, my aim is to educate viewers of the dance about Hinduism in a De-Orientalized manner. While I am a Hindu who deeply believes in Hinduism, I do not wish to impose my faith in Hinduism onto others nor do I wish to encourage viewers of the dance to convert to Hinduism. As a Hindu dancer, I hope to endorse a De-Orientalized knowledge development of Hinduism and reject an artificial, Orientalized development of Hinduism that will cause Orientalism to thrive. Thus, these goals differ from those of Christian liturgical dancers.

I do not claim that Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers must stay within the boundaries of each respective dance tradition. What I am saying is that there are certain religious and ethical guidelines, albeit strict or seemingly not strict, for each respective dance tradition. To Orientalize either dance tradition causes religious disrespect and Orientalism to thrive. Even though Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance are two distinct dance forms, it is imperative to think about how to reconcile the dance forms in a manner that does not Orientalize either dance form or show any insensitivity.

HYBRIDITY: CONTEMPLATIVE SPIRITUAL DANCE

It is imperative to think about how to develop something *new* as a way to reconcile Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers. Here, in the pedagogical space of hybridity, I turn to Homi Bhabha (1994), a postcolonial scholar influenced by the work of Franz Fanon and Edward Said. Bhabha (1994) writes about the importance of negotiating boundaries:

What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, *continuously*, 'opening out', remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference – be it class, gender or race. Such assignations of social differences – where difference is neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between* – find their agency in a form of 'future' where the past is not originary, where the present is not simply transitory. It is, if I may stretch a point, an interstitial future, that emerges *in-between* the claims of the past and the needs of the present. (p. 219)

Bhabha indicates in this quote that identities stimulate a need to negotiate in spaces that will result in the remaking of boundaries. There is a call to expose the limitations of the East and the West in an effort to acknowledge the space

in-between that interconnects the past traditions and history, with the present and the future. This call exists because we do not just live in a Western world or an Eastern world, but rather we live as a part of humanity in *a* world. While it is crucial to maintain fidelity to each respective dance tradition, it is also imperative to acknowledge that there is an urgent need for unity. This goal of unity should aim to move beyond mere tolerance for each respective dance tradition and towards a genuine understanding that appreciates each tradition. When this occurs, dancers can unite to dance together in a manner that is sensitive to Orientalism and colonizing agendas. As I think about this pedagogical concern, I consider it necessary to develop something *new* in a pedagogical space of hybridity.

Unfortunately, the pedagogical space of hybridity may become defective if I do not first consider the essentialness of representative knowledge of each respective dance tradition. Before moving into a pedagogical space of hybridity, Hindu dancers need to maintain a De-Orientalized understanding of Christian liturgical dance and Christian liturgical dancers need to maintain a De-Orientalized understanding of Hindu dance.

It is my hope that Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers will engage in a de-Orientalization development of knowledge of each respective dance tradition. This De-Orientalized knowledge should aim to correct any misrepresentations or misinterpretations of each respective dance form. A De-Orientalized understanding is needed of what constitutes Hindu dance and what makes up the form of Christian liturgical dance. Once this de-Orientalization occurs, then Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers could meet in a pedagogical space of hybridity to think about a new form of dance that shows sensitivity for both Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance. This new form of dance should not misrepresent either Hindu dance or Christian liturgical dance because the new dance form should be neither Hindu nor Christian. To this extent, I suggest dancers reconcile to develop a *new* dance genre in the pedagogical space of hybridity as a medium that has the potential to bring Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers together in a spiritual manner that remains sensitive to each respective dance form.

Once Hindu dancers and liturgical dancers meet in the pedagogical space of hybridity, then they become entangled with one another. Essentially, they merge together with sensitivity for each respective tradition. It is my hope that something new will develop in the pedagogical space of hybridity once liturgical dancers and Hindu dancers become entangled. Here, I propose a possible reconciliation for Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers. This solution is a new form of dance, which I call *contemplative spiritual dance*. I do not use the term *contemplative dance* in the sense that refers to the many contemplative dance movements in existence. Rather, I use the term *contemplative spiritual dance* to refer to a new genre of dance as opposed to a dance movement. In this genre of dance, Hindu dancers and liturgical dancers can come together to share each

respective tradition in a manner that remains sensitive for each tradition and develops new guidelines for a new genre of dance. Perhaps, contemplative spiritual dance should aim to teach about religion as opposed to mandatorily enforce religious practice. While contemplative spiritual dance has the ability to be sacred, the goal in the pedagogical space of hybridity is to teach one another with a De-Orientalized sensitivity and come together to dance whether we are theists or atheists.

As a Hindu dancer, I personally struggle with maintaining Hindu dance ethics while sharing the form of Hindu dance with those who desire to learn. I plan to use a *contemplative spiritual dance* framework, which I am currently developing, to engage in a dance practice with non-Hindus. In this form of dance, I bring my own history as a Kuchipudi Hindu dancer together with dancers who have their own histories within dance. As an educator, I think about the common goals I share with other dancers. I facilitate a philosophical discussion with other dancers as I ask important questions such as:

- As a viewer and/or participant, how can we show sensitivity for each respective dance form?
- As a viewer and/or participant, how do we ensure that we do not misrepresent each respective dance form?
- If we participate in each other's dance form, then how do we respect the particular dance tradition's ethics while remaining faithful to our own dance form?
- How do we move beyond mere tolerance and move towards a genuine appreciation for each respective dance form?

These questions provide an example of the philosophical dialogue that should occur in a space of hybridity as Hindu dancers and Christian liturgical dancers discuss a *contemplative spiritual dance form*. With a *contemplative spiritual dance* theoretical framework in mind, I do not aim to teach dance students to convert to Hinduism, but rather aim to teach *about* Hinduism. Similarly, Christian liturgical dancers may wish to use a *contemplative spiritual dance* theoretical framework to teach about the liturgy as opposed to an evangelical art form that seeks to convert non-Christians to Christianity.

To summarize, from a postcolonial perspective, it is imperative to acknowledge Hindu dancers as *Hindu dancers* and Christian liturgical dancers as *liturgical dancers*. Critics might argue that liturgical dance involves dance that pertains to worship. These critics might say that since Hindu dancers engage in worship as part of Hinduism, Hindu dancers are therefore liturgical. However, the term *liturgical dance* has its own form in the West. The term *liturgical dance* is used to describe a specific type of dance form that exists in the West. Therefore, *liturgical dance* does not accurately describe the specificity of Hindu dance that exists in the East.

In fact, those who still use the term *liturgical dance* to describe Hindu dance need to be aware of the way this term conceals the hidden power manipulations of the West and furthers Orientalist agendas. In order to engage in de-Orientalization and approach the East with sensitivity, it is crucial to refer to Hindu dancers as *Hindu dancers*. We cannot say liturgical dancers are Hindu dancers and Hindu dancers are liturgical dancers because this shows insensitivity for each respective dance form. As you may recall, Bramhaji, a part of the Hindu trinity, created Hindu dance to tame the five senses. The dance form of Hinduism is rooted in the ancient Hindu text known as the *Natya Shastra*. On the contrary, Christian liturgical dance developed based on humankind's interest in religious dance. There is no religious authoritative ethical text in Christian liturgical dance. Furthermore, the West Orientalized Hindu dance as the West moved Hindu dance to become more like Western forms of dance. This in turn caused the West to impose its own ideal of dance onto the Eastern form of Hindu dance, which severely caused Orientalism and colonizing agendas to thrive.

To prevent this from continuing, I urge scholars to think about the distinctions between Christian liturgical dance and Hindu dance to prevent Orientalist agendas from thriving. In addition, the dance curriculum and dance pedagogy differs in Christian liturgical dance and Hindu dance because each respective dance form has distinct components. While Hindu dance and Christian liturgical dance are distinguishable, I propose a *contemplative spiritual dance* form as a medium between the respective dance forms. I urge Hindu dancers and liturgical dancers to come together in a space of hybridity to determine how to remain in fidelity to each respective dance tradition while displaying a sincere sensitivity that moves beyond mere tolerance for one another.

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